The Report Committee for Aleina Anne Nicholas Kreider
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

Bodily Subjectivity as Alternative Selfhood: *The Voyage Out* Beyond the Bildungsroman

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

_____

Mia Carter, Supervisor

_____

Hannah Wojciehowski

Bodily Subjectivity as Alternative Selfhood: *The Voyage Out* Beyond the Bildungsroman

by

Aleina Anne Nicholas Kreider, BA

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2015

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my thanks go my advisor, Mia Carter, without whose enthusiasm, encouragement, patience, generosity, and guidance, this project would not have been possible. Thanks also to my second reader, Hannah Wojciehowski, who introduced me to the concept of bodily subjectivity and has been integral to the development of my critical perspective. To the entire English Department at UT Austin, your support, scholarly, moral, and financial has propelled me to where I find myself today—a far stronger writer and academic (I hope) than I was upon entering this program just two years ago. A final round of thanks is well-deserved by my partner, Ben, whose support has been unwavering and vital to my success and my happiness.

Abstract

Bodily Subjectivity as Alternative Selfhood: *The Voyage Out* Beyond the Bildungsroman

Aleina Anne Nicholas Kreider, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisor: Mia Carter

Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, by initiating and yet resisting the traditional bildungsroman form, illustrates the inadequacy of this genre's brand of self-development and seeks an alternative mode of selfhood. The novel's protagonist, Rachel Vinrace, though apparently "formless" and unable to "develop," nevertheless exhibits a sense of self and seems to be more than mere blankness. In exploring what selfhood might be when the bildungsroman-self is untenable, *The Voyage Out* ultimately reaches toward a kind of subjectivity not rooted primarily in intellectual and linguistic experiences—which typically come to shape the subject in the bildungs—but in bodily experience. This bodily subjectivity offers rewards beyond those the telos of the bildungsroman enables, and in affirming the value of the bodily, *The Voyage Out* also simultaneously facilitates a feminist move towards reclaiming this characteristic of "femininity" that has so often been used to render women lesser-than. Subjectivity and self having long been associated

with mind rather than body, they have also long been in the masculine domain, while the feminine is aligned with the bodily, the other, and the object. As *The Voyage Out* reclaims the value of the body and its involvement in subjectivity, then, it also challenges the notion that to be a subject one must be the mental, masculine hero of the traditional bildungsroman.

Table of Contents

Introduction

"The heart of Virginia Woolf's work is her search for the Self," Louise Poresky argued in 1981. "Once that fact is acknowledged, her imagery, stylistic techniques, themes, and philosophical theories cohere into a pattern" (15). Well, that idea has *certainly* been acknowledged since the time of Poresky's essay. Selfhood and subjectivity are favorite topics amongst Woolf scholars; it is now taken for granted that Woolf's fictional works explore what it means and how it feels to be a self or a subject in the world. However, scholars have often found it difficult to make sense of Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, while novels like *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, and *The Waves* have been vigorously explored for their robust possibilities. Unlike these more canonical Woolf novels, *The Voyage Out* seems to depict a failure of the self to make itself known, felt, or articulated. Rachel Vinrace, the novel's protagonist, often appears "formless," inarticulate, even non-conscious; she seems, at first glance, merely blown about by the outer forces of her life, failing to achieve any substantial understanding or control of her self in the process.

Jed Esty is now well-known for arguing that Rachel's failure to develop past adolescence is part of a larger Modernist phenomenon: Late-Victorian and early-Modernist novels, he argues, frequently use distortions of the bildungsroman form in order to explore the difficulties, even the impossibility, of negotiating selfhood within a set of national social structures[1] at a time when the idea of "nation" is destabilized by

[1] As Bakhtin emphasizes, the bildungsroman represents "an image of *man growing* in *national-historical* time (25). As such, the bildungsroman requires a "tacitly masculine and explicitly national form of emergence" (Esty 5).

colonial expansion. *The Voyage Out*, then, finds good company in *Portrait of the Artist*, *Lord Jim*, *The Last September*, and other Modernist novels in its depiction of a protagonist who—having journeyed to or been born into a land conspicuously marked by colonialization—seems to embark upon a path to self-development or self-formation, but in fact fails to reach the endpoint of adulthood. Indeed, Esty's argument is impressive, and does an excellent job of illuminating some of the factors of the Modernist experience that make self-formation—the way it is envisioned in the traditional bildungsroman—difficult. But Esty's argument ends at the point of showing how the vision of self that the bildungsroman implies is untenable, and it seems to me there is also something further to say about how *The Voyage Out* grapples with the concept of self. That is, the novel does not simply abandon the possibility of selfhood in a Modern world, but struggles for new ways to figure what selfhood is and how it might be experienced.

Louise Poresky explores a similar idea in *The Elusive Self*. In this book, she suggests that there is more than one concept of "self" at play, and that Woolf's characters are almost always struggling to negotiate between the two. "The Self, that core or center of the human psyche that Woolf's characters seek," she takes to be different from "self" (with a lowercase 's'), the latter referring to one's "superficial" identity: "We can say that a man or a woman who operates strictly in accordance with society's expectations—for instance, a man should assert himself, whereas a woman should remain passive—adopts a particular self. Yet, as Virginia Woolf suggests in her novels, all individuals possess a Self that defies such categorization" (15-6). We might compare what Poresky calls the "self" with a lowercase 's' to the bildungsroman-self, in that these selves are a

reconciling of individual personality to particular social roles and obligations. Her understanding of "Self," on the other hand, bears far more similarity to the kind of self that Woolf explores in *The Voyage Out*—one which springs from the simple fact that human beings are *subjects* with a particular way of perceiving the world and understanding our relation to it. Poresky's argument is useful, then, because she suggests that Woolf's novels ultimately strive towards capital-S Selfhood, that "core or center of the human psyche," and not toward selfhood with a lowercase 's'.

However, Poresky connects this "Self" to a "profound psychic wholeness," whereas this essay will resist the assumption that selfhood must be exclusively psychic, conscious, and whole, an assumption which it takes to be limiting. It is this assumption which lead Poresky to conclude that Woolf's characters "consistently move toward Selfhood, until [they] reach it and understand it" but then "the personality descends into the self again, for, as Woolf demonstrates, sustained Selfhood is impossible" (16). In thinking this way, Poresky implicitly accepts the idea that the achievement of selfhood is a conscious process of negotiation and articulation—an assumption at the core of the traditional bildungsroman. She claims that "the composite personality that searches for its Self through the novels operates primarily on the conscious level in *The Voyage Out*," however I want to suggest that non-conscious, even non-psychic experiences of selfhood are possible, and that Rachel's selfhood is one that operates as much or more on a non-conscious or pre-conscious level than it does on a conscious one (18).

In this essay, I will take up Esty's notion that *The Voyage Out* is a distortion of the bildungsroman—even an antibildungsroman—but instead of arguing that the novel is

therefore a dramatization of a failed progression toward selfhood, I want to suggest that this novel, by virtue of the antibildungsroman form, engages with formulations of selfhood which are alternative to the selfhood implied by the teleology of the bildungsroman. That teleology is one which takes selfhood to be unformed in childhood, in flux during adolescence, and finally stabilized in the transition to adulthood—a stabilization which reconciles the individual's qualities and desires with social roles and obligations and forms them to a particular mold. When *The Voyage Out* begins, the twenty-four year old Rachel has not yet (nor, as it turns out, ever will) achieve this stabilized self, but I am interested in discovering what kind of selfhood she has instead, for she does seem to be some kind of self, and if the novel so conspicuously sets up and yet subverts the bildungsroman structure, it must also call our attention to the selfhood which it explores *instead of* the bildungsroman-self. The novel does this, I will suggest, primarily through an exploration of Rachel's bodiliness. Rachel's subjectivity offers a way of understanding selfhood which is not restricted to concepts of conscious articulation and the negotiation of sign systems (words, names, social positions), but experienced through bodiliness—through engaging with one's bodily senses.

To find selfhood through Rachel's bodiliness is also to forward a feminist project. As Elizabeth Grosz explains in *Volatile Bodies*, the "mind," conceived as the counter to "body" (as in the "mind/body split" or the "mind/body problem"), has been valued over and above body. In other words, "mind" is the dominant term in this dichotomy, and

"body" the subordinate.[2] This hierarchy of mind over body has been supported by and understood through a number of other dichotomies. Grosz provides us with a generous list:

> [R]eason and passion, sense and sensibility, outside and inside, *self and other*, depth and surface, reality and appearance, mechanism and vitalism, transcendence and immanence, temporality and spatiality, *psychology and physiology*, form and matter, and so on. (3, emphasis mine)

The terms aligned with body in these binary pairs tend to define the body in "passive, inert terms" and depict the body as "an intrusion on or interference with the operation of mind" (3-4). Grosz is interested here in exploring the mind/body dichotomy because the male/female and Man/Woman dichotomies are also mapped onto the mind/body dichotomy and onto each binary pair that is aligned with it. Woman, aligned with the body, takes on the ill-favored associations of its fellow subordinate terms. Feminist critics, Grosz believes, must work towards a deconstruction of the mind/body dichotomy that has been so prevalent in Western cultural history; an "embodied subjectivity" or "psychical corporeality" needs to be theorized (22).[3]

My attempt to read the "self" and the "subject" through the body rather than exclusively through the mind (as has so often been done) is not only an attempt to explore

[2] This is a phenomenon which Grosz traces backwards in time, through its perhaps most famous realization in Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*, and all the way to the time of Plato (6).

[3] Grosz uses the term "embodied" rather than "bodily," which I have chosen instead. I believe that using the terms "bodily" and "bodily subjectivity" better enables the kind of deconstruction Grosz calls for, whereas "embodied" might actually reinforce this binary by suggesting that there is, on the one hand, the subject and, on the other hand, the body in which that subject finds him- or herself, rather than the two being a single, irreducible entity. Using the term "bodily subjectivity" is my way of addressing the phenomenology of a subjectivity experienced through the body, and not just the idea that a person is a subject *inside* a body.

an alternative selfhood and subjectivity in *The Voyage Out*, but also an attempt to answer Grosz's call to theorize an "embodied subjectivity" through the character of Rachel. In reclaiming the body's involvement in selfhood—at least one understanding of selfhood—I hope to help subvert the hierarchy of mind over body in favor of a more egalitarian relationship between the two.

Failed Bildungsroman

To begin, it will first be necessary to clarify what is meant by "bildungsroman." As I have indicated in the previous section, the bildungsroman features a subject growing into adulthood within a well-defined social structure. This growth involves a conflict between self-determination and socialization, which the traditional bildungsroman resolves at the end with a subject whose idiosyncrasies have been matched to—or remolded to fit—that social structure to which the subject must become homogenous (Moretti 233). In following this trajectory, youth is frequently characterized by the unformed potentiality of the subject, adolescence by the negotiating of the central conflict between self and society, and adulthood by the stabilization of the self as it is reconciled with the surrounding social structure.

This stabilization is particularly emphasized in the English bildungsroman, which tends to follow what Franco Moretti calls "the classification principle." These bildungsromane cast adulthood as a particularly well-defined and stable set of roles and behaviors which are a person's final endpoint. As such, the English bildungsroman takes on a particularly teleological form in which "events acquire meaning when they led [*sic*] to *one* ending, and one only" (7, emphasis in original). Accordingly, adulthood is rendered not only a stable state of the self in society, but even a crystallized one—there is precious little room for flexibility within strictly defined norms (hence, for example, the predominance of the "marriage plot" within English bildungsromane[4]). Youth, under this model, is not the focus of the story; rather, it is subordinated to the endpoint of maturity,

[4] Moretti even goes so far as to state that "the classical *Bildungsroman* 'must' always conclude with marriages" (22).

having meaning "only *in so far as* it leads to a stable and 'final' identity" (8, emphasis in original).

The Voyage Out is, on the one hand, a failed bildungsroman, as Esty suggests. Though already twenty-four when the story begins, Rachel does not seem to have "developed" past an adolescent state. Instead of being crystallized into a stable self, Rachel is largely unable to articulate anything concrete about herself, and appears to others as an "unformed" human being throughout the novel (207). Rachel's own conscious conception of what it is—or should be—to be a self is very similar to the kind that emerges from a typical bildungsroman. She calls this "personality": "The vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, umergeable, like the sea or the wind, flashed into Rachel's mind, and she became profoundly excited at the thought of living" (84). In the midst of her excitement over such a vision of selfhood, she conflates "everlasting" changelessness with the "real" and comes to view the differentiation of herself from the rest of the world as the telos of her future "living." But each time she attempts to discover and articulate such a figure of her own self, she seems to fail. Her early claim that she is a Christian, for example, falls apart under scrutiny and she clumsily searches for what it is she really believes.[5] She later articulates the world around her as "vast blocks of matter" in which she and others are amorphous, substance-less "patches of light" (293). It will seem unsurprising then—even necessary—that the marriage plot which the novel initiates will ultimately fail. By the

[5] Later she will claim to believe in "everything!" but proceed to become lost in a list of things she does not believe in—God, Mr. Bax, the hospital nurse, Evelyn's mother (249-50).

novel's end, Rachel has died without having discovered in herself the kind of everlasting personality she was so excited by when on board the *Euphrosyne*.

Some critics have nevertheless considered *The Voyage Out* a good example of the successful bildungsroman. Frederick McDowell, for example, claims that "Rachel develops substantially beyond the constricted individual she was at the outset" (76). At the beginning, he notes, Rachel is "a psychic and spiritual virgin as well as a physical one, but she attains maturity as a result of a voyage that takes her not only outward, away from England, but inward into the deepest reaches of the spirit." As such, he agrees with Avrom Fleishman that "Truly, hers is a 'metaphysical education'" (77). However, aside from his assertion that Rachel's relationship with Terence—romantic[6] and, apparently, sexual[7]—amounts to a psychic and sexual maturation (a claim I will resist later on), McDowell is forced to look to characters other than Rachel to find signs of development and progress in the novel. Turning to Terence, McDowell argues that he exhibits a kind of development in recognizing the "challenge of life," (88), that we "live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, knowing nothing, leaping from moment to moment as from world to world" (Woolf 127). McDowell argues that "our task is to reconcile and harmonize," these disjunctions and incertitudes by "cultivat[ing]" a sense of complexity (88). However, here McDowell is conflating the bildungsroman as imagined in the nineteenth century with the bildungsroman (or, we might say, the antibildungsroman) of the

[6] "It is love, Woolf demonstrates in *The Voyage Out*, that can raise the inner being to its highest point...leading the individual at once to unimaginable depths within the psyche and outward to a commingling with the cosmic energies that govern existence" (81).

[7] McDowell adopts James Naremore's stance that the scene in the jungle which solidifies Rachel and Terence's romantic relationship is a sexual encounter, as well as Avrom Fleishman's assertion that this jungle is a "Garden of Eden in which sexual experience means the loss of innocence and the acquiring of knowledge," not to mention the initiation of death (82).

Modernist period. He supposes that we find the same "metaphysical," "progressive" teleology of the nineteenth century bildungsroman within what Michael Giffin calls the "existential dilemma" more common to the Modernists' take on the bildungsroman form. In fact, Modernist writers tend to resist the telos of classical metaphysics: "Between the mid-19th and mid-20th century, the truth claims of classical metaphysics were increasingly considered mythological while movements that interrogated or ignored classical metaphysics were considered to participate in a process of demythologization when exploring the human condition and its existential dilemma" (Giffin, "Prologue"). Giffin goes on to clarify that "Because classical metaphysics has a sense of humanity's end or purpose or goal (its telos), the novel influenced by classical metaphysics is essentially a place (a topos) where this telos is explored." By contrast, "modernism challenged the telos of classical metaphysics as part of their mid-19th to mid-20th century exploration of the human condition and its existential dilemma," and this movement away from classical metaphysics "reached its nadir in modernism" ("Prologue"). This idea of the Modernist antibildungsroman as interested in existential dilemma rather than a teleological self suited to classical metaphysical ideas common to the nineteenth century will be useful later on when discussing Rachel's death. For now, I want to emphasize that McDowell's classification of *The Voyage Out* as a bildungsroman neglects the tensions between existentialist concerns and metaphysical telos; as such, his assertion that Rachel develops the kind of self that the bildungsroman narrates is ultimately suspect.

Alternate Models of Selfhood, Bodily Subjectivity

Nevertheless, it seems disingenuous to claim that Rachel entirely lacks some kind of selfhood. It may be difficult to pin down and articulate, but there is the nagging sense that Rachel has some substance to her. The novel may begin from outside of her—the narrative is first more interested in the interiority of Helen, then tends to describe Rachel mostly through her outwardly perceptible behaviors—but as the novel progresses, the reader more and more finds his- or herself inside Rachel's head, experiencing her interiority, and sharing her views. The timing and narrative centrality of this shift of focus to Rachel is in fact something that emerges more and more fully throughout Woolf's drafts of the novel. *Melymbrosia*, Woolf's name for *The Voyage Out* during her early years of drafts, delays its zooming in on Rachel significantly—while *The Voyage Out* shifts the reader's focus to Rachel at about the time that the Dalloways board the ship and take interest in her, *Melymbrosia* maintains an energetic flitting in and out of various characters' perspectives until about the time of Rachel and Terence's romance, at which point it settles a bit more steadily into Rachel's perspective. Over time, Woolf amends her earlier drafts to focus more and more eagerly on Rachel, turning the reader's attention to her much more quickly. In *The Voyage Out*, what we find is not *Melymbrosia*'s equal-opportunity approach to perspectives but instead a narrator with an increasing affinity for Rachel's point of view. The shift between *Melymbrosia* and *The Voyage Out* makes the latter novel's narrative interest in Rachel's subjectivity all the more clear. The emphasis on Rachel's interiority communicates an eagerness in the novel to explore her subjectivity: it both marshals the reader's attention and encourages her to identify with

Rachel, as if she were having the same thoughts. Although the topic of readers' identification with characters has been out of vogue for some time within literary scholarship, reader-character identification is nevertheless an important factor in how we interpret a myriad of literary features, including tone, mood, and focus. In the case of *The Voyage Out*, the novel's adeptness at shifting the reader's attention and identification toward Rachel calls into question Esty's suggestion in *Unseasonable Youth* that Rachel is primarily a "null function" within this text, serving mostly to demonstrate the failure of the plot of maturation (129). Certainly Rachel does fail to mature in the traditional way, but Esty's assessment is incomplete when it comes to the question of the novel's clear investment in Rachel's interiority.

In addition to its increasing narrative attention to Rachel's interiority, *The Voyage Out* also suggests that there is some substantial selfhood within Rachel in more explicit ways. Although she frequently struggles to articulate her individual thoughts, feelings, and qualities which make her distinct from other persons, Rachel does have moments in which she recognizes herself as different from others. She even sometimes manages to articulate this difference, at least in the form of saying what she is *not*: "Thank God, Helen, I'm not like you!" she exclaims at the end of chapter nineteen, "I sometimes think you don't think or feel or care or do anything but exist!" Implicit in her criticism is a sense of *her*self as thinking, feeling, caring, doing something more than merely existing, the latter of which, she goes on to suggest, is "being nothing" (262).

In these suggestions of a self in spite of Rachel's "formlessness," *The Voyage Out* struggles with the question of what kind of self might be possible when the version

offered by the bildungsroman form becomes untenable. Perhaps the novel does not settle confidently on a new, singular paradigm of selfhood, but *The Voyage Out* does make suggestions of different possibilities by giving the reader an undeniable impression of Rachel as a self. As a result, the text seems to invite the reader to explore what makes Rachel a subject and an individual—what parts of her experience make her appear to us as a substantive person rather than merely the vague outward appearance of a person with no inner self. Like Helen, we wonder what makes Rachel "a live if unformed human being, experimental, and not always fortunate in her experiments, but with powers of some kind, and a capacity for feeling" (207).

Antonio Damasio is a useful resource for articulating (one of) the way(s) in which the novel explores Rachel's selfhood. Damasio's project in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* is to explain how the body—through its sensations and affectations—is the foundation of every human's sense of self. The body, he argues, has certain preset groups of responses—e.g. increased blood flow, sweating, release of certain hormones— to certain sensations, which are affectations (or "emotions" as he also calls them). These groups of responses, when experienced repeatedly in the same way, can then be represented in the mind as patterns, and understood as "feelings" (e.g. happiness, fear, anger). The ability to experience as patterned these bodily responses to external stimuli is what then leads to a sense of self differentiated from the external world, a sense of oneself as subject, for these external stimuli may be various but the body's response to them becomes increasingly familiar, recognizable, representable, and so awareness of the body as differentiated from the

external emerges. The sense of self that emerges here is what Damasio calls the "core self", and it is a more generic kind of selfhood, experienced by all humans similarly. It is the autobiographical self which allows us to experience ourselves as qualitatively different persons from other selves around us; the autobiographical self emerges as the human's memory of past bodily experiences allows the human to construct a kind of narrative (though Damasio is careful to note that the narrative need not be linguistic) of the experience of self over time.

To summarize, Damasio's version of selfhood reclaims the importance of the body—with its sensations and affectations—for a phenomenon usually located primarily within the mind. That is, self-development in the bildungsroman is usually figured almost exclusively as a process involving linguistic articulation of the intellectual experiences of a protagonist over time, especially as it relates to a struggle to articulate themselves into certain social sign systems (social roles and the kinds of persons that inhabit them), but Damasio's model rejects the idea that the phenomenon of selfhood and self-development occurs exclusively within the mind. Damasio's body-oriented model is useful when considering Rachel's selfhood, because she is often uncomfortable with language, but very much engaged with her bodily sensations and affectations.[8]

This orientation is manifested, for example, in her love of music: "It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant or ever talked of a feeling they felt, but that was

[8] Damasio's model does not account for how gender/sex might take part in a subject's experience of their body and the self, either "core" or "autobiographical" that arises from it. Instead, his model assumes a gender-neutral body that is experienced similarly by all subjects. For my argument, this is sufficient, but there is much potential for scholarship on Woolf to employ a modified version of Damasio's model—one that would help explore the ways in which gender and/or sex influence Woolf's characters' experiences of their bodies and of their subjectivity.

what music was for. Reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about, one could accept a system in which things went round and round quite satisfactorily to other people, without often troubling to think about it" (37). Not only does Rachel feel that what one feels is realer than what one says, as in the above quote, she also frequently avoids verbal communication, or when trying to communicate, fails. As Terence and Rachel walk together in the jungle, for example, they exchange affirmations of their affection for one another for the first time, but for Rachel this is a moment in which she merely repeats the words of Terence, feeling much more moved by the sounds of this encounter than of the words themselves:

> "You like being with me?" Terence asked.
>
> "Yes, with you," she replied.
>
> …"We are happy together." He did not seem to be speaking, or she to be hearing.
>
> "Very happy," she answered.
>
> … "We love each other," Terence said.
>
> "We love each other," she repeated.
>
> The silence was then broken by their voices which joined in tones of strange unfamiliar sound which formed no words…. Sounds stood out from the background making a bridge across their silence; they heard the swish of the trees and some beast croaking in a remote world. (271)

In this moment, Rachel merely parrots what Terence says, and is ultimately more content with their silence. Rather than their words, which she hears and yet does not hear

(hearing as "sounds" rather than as "words"), she is attuned to the sound of their silence, the trees, and the beast croaking in a remote world.

When Rachel does earnestly attempt to communicate verbally, especially to communicate about who she is or what she believes, she often fails. During her first intimate conversation with Richard Dalloway, they speak of politics, Rachel attempting to provide an example of the importance of providing not only for people's material needs, but their psychic and affective needs as well. She attempts to communicate this through the example of a widow who peers in her cupboard each day to find more or less sugar or tea. However, Richard responds by asserting that "we citizens are part of [a] machine; …if the meanest screw fails in its task, the proper working of the whole is impaired." Rachel is dissatisfied with this response: "It was impossible to combine the image of a lean black widow, gazing out of her window, and longing for some one to talk to, with the image of a vast machine…. The attempt at communication had been a failure" (66). Rachel in this episode feels frustrated by not being able to make herself understood, and her failure to communicate about herself bears similarity to her early comments about her Christianity, which are immediately invalidated. Natania Rosenfeld sees such failures as an "inability to voice subjectivity in a world where subjectivity is claimed by men," bringing to attention the ways in which both subjectivity and language (and their intersection) are aligned with the Man in the Man/Woman dichotomy (28).[9]

[9] This too reinforces *The Voyage Out*'s status as a kind of failed bildungsroman, for the classical bildungsroman is associated both with masculinity (see n1) and with language. As Moretti states, the possibility for thought to remain or become "abstract" is, for the classical bildungsroman, a great risk. "'Ideas' must never drift too far from 'life'," as Moretti puts it, and the subjugation of thoughts to language—particularly spoken language—is the surest preventative: conversation "subjugates the manifestations of thought and draws from them a plastic and pliable language, a refined and unedited

However, it is not only through language that one can experience selfhood and subjectivity.

It is through bodily experiences that Rachel's selfhood often becomes apparent to her, and to the reader. During the excursion to the native village, as Terence and Rachel walk together discussing their engagement, Rachel's past feelings, and the world around them, Rachel experiences a poignant flash of her own "person" or "self" and the experience going on within it: "Very gently and quietly, almost as if it were the blood singing in her veins, or the water of the stream running over stones, Rachel became conscious of a new feeling within herself, with a little surprise at recognizing in her own person so famous a thing" (283). Rachel experiences her feeling, which she later calls "happiness," in terms of her own body—her blood in her veins—and in this kind of experience a "person" or "self" to which the experience applies is implicitly posited; the self arises in tandem with the recognition of the bodily experience. Such moments support Damasio's understanding of body as integral to the idea of self.

This episode in the jungle near the native village goes on to describe many more bodily sensations, inviting the reader into Rachel's mode of subjectivity. In fact, these sensations become increasingly disconnected and nonsensical; they are not sufficiently linked to an exposition of events or the sequence of time. Ultimately, the reader is forced to turn off the impulse to rationalize, articulate, or understand the scene at hand and

---

rhetoric of the 'concrete' (50-1). While the abstractness of interiority has the potential to resist the classification principle—that is, the potential to elude normative social categories—the concreteness of language conforms thoughts to normative categories by forcing them to become relevant to external "life."

instead join Rachel in her experience, feel what she feels, for the strange, almost hallucinatory quality of the episode resists rationalization:

> The grasses and breezes surrounding and murmuring all around them, they never noticed that the swishing of the grasses grew louder and louder, and did not cease with the lapse of the breeze. A hand dropped abrupt as iron on Rachel's shoulder; it might have been a bolt from heaven. She fell beneath it, and the grass whipped across her eyes and filled her mouth and ears. Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. Helen was upon her. Rolled this way and that, now seeing only forests of green, and now the high blue heaven, she was speechless and almost without sense. At last she lay still, all the grasses shaken round her and before her by her panting. Over her loomed two great heads, the heads of a man and woman, of Terence and Helen. Both were flushed, both laughing, and the lips were moving; they came together and kissed in the air above her. Broken fragments of speech came down to her on the ground…. Raising herself and sitting up, she too realised Helen's soft body, the strong and hospitable arms, and happiness swelling and breaking in one vast wave. When this fell away, and the grasses once more lay low, and the sky became horizontal, and the earth rolled out flat on each side, and the trees stood upright, she was the first to perceive a little row of human figures standing patiently in the distance. (283-4)

Throughout this episode, the reader is kept strangely in the dark as to what exactly is going on (Is Rachel rolling down a hill? Has Helen attacked her, or has Rachel simply fallen? Are Terence and Helen kissing?). The narrative voice, rather than taking the reader logically through the events, devotes its attention to Rachel's bodily sensations—murmuring and swishing sounds, the tactile sensations of breeze and the fall of Helen's hand, the sights of green grass and blue sky, and the sound of speech (no attempt is made to report on its meaning). Even as the narrator describes Rachel standing to her feet, the reader is forced to experience this in terms of Rachel's sensation rather than understand it broadly in terms of what kind of event occurred: we see the grasses recede downwards, the sky change its apparent orientation along with the trees; as Rachel's body moves, the images put in front of our eyes change with her. In this moment, the reader's connection to Rachel is perhaps more intimate than ever—it is almost as though we *are* Rachel.

The fact that this jungle episode occasions the aforementioned flash of self in Rachel is significant also because it occurs while in a conspicuously colonized space, rather than back at the hotel, where we only see British vacationers interacting in a homogenously British space. What is there to glean from the fact that Rachel's presence in the jungle puts her in touch with her self? Jed Esty argues that Rachel's identification with the colonized Other highlights both as infantilized subjects. This is not the only thing Rachel has in common with the colonized Other: while, for Esty, unseasonable youth and affiliation with the colonized Other converge by means of the changing relationship of the Modern individual to his or her nation, in Hélène Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa," these things converge by means of an attempt to illustrate

woman's relationship to her body. In this essay—whose central message is that "Woman must write her self" by writing her body back into the literature from which it has been excluded—Cixous argues that men have yet to really express their sexuality, because what they have expressed so far "stems from the opposition activity/passivity, from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the consequential phantasm of woman as a 'dark continent' to penetrate and to 'pacify'" (875, 878). Cixous at once illustrates how woman and colonized natives are othered and how they are associated with the body, particularly in the sense of being sexual objects. Thus, Rachel's connection to this colonized space establishes not only the connection between youth and the decentering of the 'nation' concept, but also harkens back to the ways in which woman's bodiliness has been used to make her lesser-than, as has the native's, and reaffirms the importance of reclaiming bodiliness.

Other moments in *The Voyage Out* also support the ways in which Damasio sees body and mind as a kind of continuum; Rachel also experiences her mind in bodily terms. One evening, for example, sitting on the deck of the *Euphrosyne*, Rachel observes the waves:

> Inextricably mixed in dreamy confusion, her mind seemed to enter into communion, to be delightfully expanded and combined, with the spirit of the whitish boards on deck, with the spirit of the sea, with the spirit of Beethoven Op. 111…. Like a ball of thistledown it kissed the sea, rose, kissed it again, and thus rising and kissing passed finally out of sight. The rising and falling of the ball of thistledown was represented by the sudden

> droop forward of her own head, and when it passed out of sight she was asleep. (37)

Through her eyes and ears, perceiving the "whitish boards," the rising and falling waves, and the sounds of Beethoven, Rachel's mind expands to commune with the "spirit" of these things. Furthermore, her mind and head act in tandem, for the rising and falling of her thistledown-mind is also "the sudden droop forward of her own head." This experience rocks both her mind and her body together, gently, until both mind and body fall into sleep. This is an excellent example of the kind of "psychical corporeality" Grosz calls for in *Volatile Bodies*.

Rachel's association with bodily experience also reinforces the usefulness of the antibildungsroman form for this story, since childhood has often been associated with both the body and with women. Consider this statement from G. Stanley Hall in his 1916 scientific study of adolescence:

> Women with literary gifts perhaps surpass men in their power to reproduce and describe [adolescence]…because their later lives…depart less from this totalizing period, or…because they are more emotional, and feeling constitutes the chief psychic ingredient of this stage of life, or they dwell more on subjective states. (546-7)

In creating a narrative that implicitly values a kind of perpetual childhood, as well as the bodiliness associated with it, Woolf reclaims this association with the bodily which has, in fact, so often been used against women. As Hélène Cixous writes in "The Laugh of the Medusa" in 1975, women have been alienated from their own bodies, as well as from

"their childhood which men have been trying desperately to make them forget, condemning it to 'eternal rest.' The little girls and their ill-mannered bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified" (877). Women, for many an age, have been made to feel that their association with childishness and the body made them less than men, and have often responded by repressing the body and hiding it away.[10] Instead, Woolf affirms the value and importance of the bodily, implicating it in the very foundations of subjectivity and selfhood.

Some scholars, however, notice Rachel's communion with the world around her and take it as an example of the eclipse of the self. For example, James Naremore notes that "some people in *The Voyage Out*—especially Rachel Vinrace and Terence Hewet—seek to realize a sense of unity with the world outside themselves" but "the gulf between people or between the ego and the world outside is not to be traversed without some cost. Once the voyage is made, a certain loss of individuality, a dissolution of the self, is the inevitable result" (25-6). Naremore claims that "One cannot, at least in Virginia Woolf's fiction, come to a heightened awareness of one's unity with what is 'out there' and at the same time conceive of significant individuals." To commune with the outside world is to recognize the current that runs beneath the surface of things, "a general truth that unites all men who submit to it," he continues, and "to make oneself fully aware of this current is to subordinate reason to feeling, and to lose awareness of the self" (26). Naremore shares the same assumption that the bildungsroman does, however, in supposing that

[10] In the translation of Cixous I have used here, the word "body" is used not only as a thing upon which action may be taken or a space in which a subject's experiences occur; it also seems to refer to a range of senses and sensations (Cixous focuses mostly on sensations related to sex and sexuality—those of masturbation, menstruation, lactation).

conscious reason is what connects us to self, and that mere feeling cannot do so. In sharing this assumption, he also enacts the very kind of criticism that Grosz feels is too common in our world where "mind" dominates over "body."

James Wood, on the other hand, theorizes these moments of communion as "absent-mindedness," and connects this absent-mindedness to feminism, claiming that by endowing her narrators with "random, drifting thought," Woolf also endows them with "a freedom which had generally been seen by society as an idleness, as nothing more than the irrelevant freedom of housebound women sitting thinking about nothing" (95). These narrators' thoughts seem irrelevant and random, and when thoughts are random, "remembered detail has no metaphysical superiority, no privilege, over what has been forgotten" (96). This breakdown of hierarchical order has often been associated with a rejection of patriarchal ways of thinking in favor of an alternative kind of thinking, one that explores and celebrates permeable boundaries and egalitarian principles. Wood's essay raises several questions, then, about the status of absent-mindedness and irrelevant thought: "Is it the very definition of self, or everything but self? Are absent-mindedness and present-mindedness the same thing?" Do Woolf's self-forgetful narrators "know who they are?" (96). These questions Wood largely leaves unanswered, but with the implication that either answer is perfectly possible in each case, contrary to our usual assumptions. Being absent-minded may be the same as being present-minded, and may in fact constitute one way of being a self and knowing oneself. Of course, Wood speaks about this in terms of "mind" only, but taking Rachel's thistledown-mind as our example,

we see that what Wood calls "absent-mindedness" is also, often, an activity intimately connected with the body.

Understanding the self as inextricably related to the body in this way may also help explain why some of Rachel's most poignant visions of selfhood come on the heels of sexual experiences. Out of her state of shock following Mr. Dalloway's kiss emerges her vision of "herself as…different from anything else" (84), because, we might argue, this state of shock involves absorption in "a thousand feelings of which she had not been conscious before" (79), feelings that persist, residually, from her intense bodily sensations during the kiss—"She fell back in her chair, with tremendous beats of the heart, each of which sent black waves across her eyes…. Her head was cold, her knees shaking, and the physical pain of the emotion was so great that she could only keep herself moving above the great leaps of her heart" (76).

Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou takes such moments to suggest that Rachel has a problematic relationship with her body—one that is actually uncomfortable and self-alienating—and therefore takes Rachel to be the sort of subject who rejects the bodily, rather than being absorbed in it. Focusing her argument largely on Rachel's relationship to food, Kitsi-Mitakou figures Rachel as having "terror and disgust at her body," which is especially expressed through her frequent avoidance and rejection of food in preference for a diet of "liquids and music." According to Kitsi-Mitakou, "her symbolic action of spitting out food" is "an indication of rejection of her own self" (22). Yet Rachel's refusal of food is also "at the same time, her refusal of prescribed notions of femininity imposed on her" (22). As such, "Rachel's anorexic body oscillates between compliance to and

denial of patriarchal standards of the female body…. The woman fasts, as men want her to, she remains slender and thin, but she can no longer be a mother, a feeder, or a sexual object" (60). All this is accomplished, according to Kitsi-Mitakou, because Rachel is anti-body, which can also be seen in the way Rachel and Terence experience their love for each other—not sexually, not "as man and woman accordingly," but spiritually and intellectually (21). But eating and sexuality are not, of course, the only modes through which people experience their bodies, and even Rachel's love for Terence, while perhaps not bodily in a sexual way, is still bodily in other ways. For Rachel, their love is a sudden clarity of vision: "She felt herself amazingly secure as she sat in her arm-chair, and able to review not only the night of the dance, but the entire past, tenderly and humorously, as if she had been turning in a fog for a long time, and could now see exactly where she had turned" (314). Their love is also an immense "calm," "quiet," and "comfort," which is reinforced by "the sound of Terence, breathing deep in his slumber" and by a merging of her body with Terence's: "Although they sat so close together, they had ceased to be little separate bodies; they had ceased to struggle and desire one another. There seemed to be a peace between them. It might be love, but it was not the love of man for woman" (315). Kitsi-Mitakou may be right to note that their love is not sexual per se, yet Rachel still experiences it through bodily sensations. The peace, calm, quiet, comfort of merging body with body is perhaps (almost paradoxically) not sexual, yet it is felt within the body all the same, and is very much a positive experience.[11] Furthermore, this is what makes clear to Rachel her feelings about Terence and the relation of her subject to his object:

[11] It may seem troubling, from a feminist perspective, that Rachel's own sexuality seems in many ways to

> So too, although she was going to marry him and to live with him for thirty, or forty, or fifty years, and to quarrel, and to be so close to him, she was independent of him; she was independent of everything else. Nevertheless, as St. John said, it was love that made her understand this, for she had never felt this independence, this calm, and this certainty until she fell in love with him, and perhaps this too was love. She wanted nothing else. (315)

From Rachel's frequent engagement with her own body, then, emerge glimpses of her self that the reader notices in spite of Rachel's difficulty with the linguistic articulation of her life, her consciousness, and her self. As Mary Gordon says of *The Waves*, this novel suggests that "we learn who we are and what life is through the body" (97-8). As such, there might be as much of a self involved in bodily-oriented characters like Rachel as there are in the more familiar mind-oriented protagonists of the traditional bildungsroman. Gordon's reading of *The Waves* also makes it clear that Woolf's interest in body and the bodily is not just a fleeting interest, but an important feature of her works throughout her career, including *The Waves*, which is perhaps the most focused of all her novels on subjectivity itself. In fact, compared to *The Waves*, *The Voyage Out*'s attempt to link the body with subjectivity might seem halfhearted, but it is nevertheless an important glimpse of Woolf's earlier, perhaps less sure attempts at working through the importance of body to subjectivity and selfhood. And in fact, she seems to struggle

---

be effaced from the text. Although the novel explores Rachel's body with much interest, Rachel's sexuality rarely features in this exploration. For Cixous, this might seem an egregious lack; for her, the bodily is always already sexual. Yet for Woolf, and for Rachel, it need not be; they do not seem to participate in that particular Freudian vision of body, or of ego, at least within the confines of *The Voyage Out*.

forward in these attempts through her various drafts of the novel; where *Melymbrosia* is less engaged with the bodily, and even uncomfortable with the body's link to subjectivity, *The Voyage Out* contains many more instances of bodily subjectivity and excises some of *Melymbrosia*'s passages that were more resistant to such a link. For example, chapter ten of *Melymbrosia* begins with a string of paragraphs not found in *The Voyage Out*, which describe, from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, what the traveling *Euphrosyne* must look like to people on shore, and before this sequence ends by slipping into the perspective of Helen, it issues a kind of moral pronouncement:

> The sea being covered with ships, the ships swarming with human beings, who each found that isolation on board spread strange ideas about life, the historian will not attempt to say which view was the right one, or which ship really mattered most. Since religion has gone out of fashion, and the soul is called the brain, these enormous spaces of silence in which our deeds and words are but as points of rock in an ocean, are discreetly ignored; the novelist respects but does not attempt to render them. (104-5)

This passage expresses a kind of discontinuity between affairs of the "soul" and affairs of the "brain," the latter of which represents a much more physiological understanding of human experience and behavior, and the shift to the focus on "brain" in the Modernist, secularized world is associated with artistic loss: "the novelist respects but does not attempt to render" these vast spaces of silence in which countless human beings each experience their own views and ideas. Point of view having everything to do with subjectivity, this passage also splits subjectivity—in the form of views and ideas—from

the “brain,” and affiliates it instead only with the “soul.” And yet, even within this passage is an implication that physical space and place is bound up with subjectivity: it suggests that being in a specific place—a ship on an ocean—and experiencing the material realities particular to it—for example, “isolation”—influences a person’s phenomenological view, alters their relationship to the world around them. It is this latter feature which makes its way more fully into *The Voyage Out*, while the narrator’s misgivings about physiology’s connection to subjectivity are lessened. *The Voyage Out* is able to connect material reality *and* the body’s experience *of* that reality to the way the subject experiences their relationship to the world. While a traditional bildungsroman focuses on the relationship of the mind to a person’s socio-cultural reality and understands a person’s subjectivity to be defined primarily by this relationship, *The Voyage Out* works toward a reconciliation of body with subjectivity, seeing the body as a crucial part of one’s relationship to one’s world. But if we are to read this novel as an exploration of—rather than a dismissal of—alternative subjectivity, what can we do with Rachel’s death?

Rachel's Death and Those Left Behind

In "On Being Ill," first published in 1926 (about nine years after *The Voyage Out*), Woolf is celebratory of the kind of altered consciousness illness offers. Hermione Lee calls this "gallantly mak[ing] light of dark and painful experiences," (xii) and of course it is useful to complicate Woolf's particularly rosy account of illness here, while her reports of her own illnesses in her diaries often complain of "these infernal pains in my head," "astonishingly incongruous dreams," "terrors," and "the tiredness of the body" (quoted on Lee xv). Nevertheless, her assessment of illness in "On Being Ill" is overtly positive, and reclaims the importance of body: "literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and, save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, and negligible and non-existent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true" (9-10). Interestingly, Woolf addresses the traditional hierarchical position of mind over body in this passage, and goes on to speak of mind in terms of a colonizer: "People write always of the doings of the mind; the thoughts that come to it; its noble plans; how the mind has *civilised* the universe" (10, emphasis mine). Body, on the other hand, she associates with the colonized:

> That illusion of the world...where however strange your experience other people have had it too...is all an illusion. We do not know our own souls, let alone the souls of others.... But in health the genial pretence must be kept up and the effort renewed—to communicate, to *civilise* to share, to cultivate the desert, *educate the native*.... In illness this make-believe

> ceases.... We float with the sticks on the stream; helter-skelter with the dead leaves on the lawn, irresponsible and disinterested and able, perhaps for the first time for years, to look round, to look up—to look, for example, at the sky. (14, emphasis mine)

In this passage, Woolf is implicitly critical of the impulse to "civilise" and "educate the native" via the mind, and prefers the "float[ing] with the sticks on the stream" which is possible when the hierarchical positions of mind and body are reversed through illness.[12] Furthermore, she suggests that this extreme version of bodily subjectivity offers the insight that we do not, ultimately, know our own souls in the way we think we do when the mind is at work rationalizing the universe, *civilising* it. There is something truer and more fruitful in realizing we do not fully know ourselves, she implies; it allows us, "perhaps for the first time for years, to look round, to look up—to look, for example, at the sky." Furthermore, in suggesting that such a possibility has not presented itself "for years," Woolf implicitly links the phenomenological experience of illness with that possible in youth. Rachel Vinrace, affiliated as she is with youth and with illness, is in an excellent position to reap the benefits of bodily subjectivity.

Yet if there is one point at which *The Voyage Out* is concerned about the negative potential of bodily subjectivity, it is in Rachel's illness. As in "On Being Ill," Woolf introduces Rachel's illness as an increased dominance of body: "every object in the room, the bed itself, and her own body with its various limbs and their different sensations were more and more important each day. She was completely cut off, and unable to

[12] Again, Rachel's affiliation with the natives of her South American vacation spot becomes all the more significant, as both are associated with body.

communicate with the rest of the world, isolated alone with her body" (330). However, in *The Voyage Out* this dominance of body often takes on the characteristics of a kind of despotism, concocting its own visions and forcing them before her eyes and ears—"For six days indeed she had been oblivious of the world outside, because it needed all her attention to follow the hot, red, quick sights which passed incessantly before her eyes" (340)—smothering her with sensations—"The heat was suffocating" (341)—and robbing her of both agentive and physical power—"she had ceased to have any will of her own; she lay on the top of the wave conscious of some pain, but chiefly of weakness" (346). While such passages confirm the link between mind and body, indeed, the body's oft-unrecognized power over mind, they tend to characterize this link as painful, worrisome, threatening. We do occasionally find more positively-valenced changes, such as in the lines, "for long spaces of time she would merely lie conscious of her body floating on the top of the bed and her mind driven to some remote corner of her body, or escaped and gone flitting round the room" (this bears similarity to the "float[ing] with the sticks in the stream, helter-skelter with the dead leaves of the lawn" of "On Being Ill"), but these glimpses of positive potential in Rachel's illness are few and far between (347). Perhaps the interim between 1915 and 1925 occasioned a change in Woolf's attitude toward body, much like the one we see between *Melymbrosia* and *The Voyage Out*. In any case, Woolf's exploration of bodily subjectivity in *The Voyage Out* may be conflicted and unsure, yet it seems to end optimistically.

This assertion will seem strange, given Rachel's death. For Jed Esty, Rachel's death is an almost inevitable result of the inaccessibility of the kind of selfhood

prescribed by the bildungsroman plot; Rachel's death during her voyage beyond the clear boundaries of her own nation is essentially just a bold punctuation of her uneasy relationship to self-development. If we follow a similar reasoning to Esty's, we can hardly help but conclude that Rachel's death suggests the ultimate failure of her particular mode of subjectivity. But this seems a too-reductive interpretation, one that brushes aside all the ways in which the novel eagerly explores Rachel's subjectivity and hints at its potential to put Rachel in touch with a substantial, full kind of selfhood. Where else do we look, then, to incorporate the fact of Rachel's death without rejecting the validity of her kind of subjectivity?

An interesting place to start is in noticing that Woolf does not end her novel with Rachel's death. In the final two chapters, other characters' interiorities are explored, other events mentioned, and affects other than mourning depicted. Each character has a different response to Rachel's death. Miss Allan feels old and tired of life, and is wearied by the feeling that she is too "strong" to die soon: "There did not seem to be much point in it all; one went on of course one went on…" (356). Mrs. Thornbury, on the other hand, feels that "the older one grows…the more certain one becomes that there is a reason. How could one go on if there were no reason?" (357). Mrs. Flushing is angry and defiant: "She refused to relinquish her friends to death. She would not submit to dark and nothingness" (359). Evelyn will struggle between the idea that "things go on, that she's still somewhere" and the idea that "we crumble up to nothing when we die," and in her encounter with death, will wonder, "Were these proposals and intimacies and adventures real, or was the contentment which she had seen on the faces of Susan and Rachel more

real than anything she had ever felt?" (362, 364). Instead of ending with the fact of Rachel's death, the novel takes an existential turn. But it is one that offers up repeated questions about "the meaning of it all," and seems to offer no answers (367).

The next chapter, in spite of all the mixed feelings caused by Rachel's sudden death, finds the hotel guests in a state of liveliness. However, this energy is punctuated by a reminder of the existential question, which takes the form of a moth:

> [T]he room was full of the indescribable stir of life. Every now and then the moth, which was now grey of wing and shiny of thorax, whizzed over their heads, and hit the lamps with a thud. A young woman put down her needlework and exclaimed, 'Poor creature! it would be kinder to kill it.' But nobody seemed disposed to rouse himself in order to kill the moth. They watched it dash from lamp to lamp, because they were comfortable, and had nothing to do. (370)

In this image, the moth is connected with the liveliness of the room, but the hotel guests are forced to wonder whether that kind of liveliness—one which throws creatures headlong into pain and self-harm as a result of their own natures—is not better ended quickly. Woolf, without needing to be explicit, revisits the existential questions surrounding Rachel's life and her premature death. But again, there seems no conviction of a definite answer, and the hotel guests find themselves content in their indecision. What enables contentment when faced with unanswerable questions of how to *be* towards death?

The final experience of Hirst may help answer this question. Hirst, upon entering the room, is still intellectually struggling with the fact of Rachel's death, as if his intellect is running up against a brick wall: "It seems impossible—" is all he can manage to say (373). But like the other hotel guests, even Hirst finds the beginnings of peace and contentedness in the experience of this evening in the hall of the hotel. Like the moth-watchers, he becomes absorbed in his sensations:

> [T]he light and warmth, the movements of the hands, and the soft communicative voices soothed him; they gave him a strange sense of quiet and relief. As he sat there, motionless, this feeling of relief became a feeling of profound happiness. Without any sense of disloyalty to Terence and Rachel he ceased to think about either of them. The movements and the voices seemed to draw together into a pattern before his eyes; he was content to sit silently watching the pattern build itself up, looking at what he hardly saw. (374)

It is with Hirst, "half-asleep, and yet vividly conscious of everything around him" that the novel ends, and it is striking that in this moment, his usual intellectualism falls away and the mode of his subjectivity approaches something more like Rachel's—bodily, absorbed in the impressions of the outside world upon the senses. It is this mode of subjectivity which seems to offer any satisfactory response to the existential absurdity of life unto death. Here Michael Giffin's distinction between the metaphysical telos of nineteenth century bildungsroman and the Modernist rejection of this telos in the face of the "existential dilemma" becomes obvious. In the wake of Rachel's death, *The Voyage Out*

is more interested in the self that lives not towards adulthood, but rather lives with the facticity of its own death. In its exploration of Rachel's alternative subjectivity, the novel offers up a new understanding of what "self" can be when the telos of life itself is disrupted by unanswerable existential questions. This alternative "self" is ultimately ateleological; it does not strive toward any larger end, but rather involves a radical embrace of the phenomenological as an end—and beginning, and middle—in itself.

That the novel ends with Hirst, rather than with Helen or Hewet—who might seem more logical choices given their larger presence within the novel's plot—is striking in itself, and offers further evidence of the benefits of the bodily. Hirst, the precocious academe and ultra-intellectual seems the unlikeliest candidate to embrace a bodily subjectivity. Yet it is clear from early on that his intellectualism isolates him from the world and the people in it. Convinced that because he is "immensely clever," "there never will be more than five people in the world worth talking to," Hirst is relieved, practically overjoyed to find companionship in Helen, exclaiming "almost with emotion" (underscoring his disconnect from bodily affect even at a moment of intense inner feeling) that "You can't think...what a difference it makes finding some one to talk to!" (162). Not only is Hirst highly intellectual, but his mental life is disconnected from his physical body. When he undresses, the narrator comments that, "naked of all but his shirt, and bent over the basin, Mr. Hirst no longer impressed one with the majesty of his intellect, but with the pathos of his young yet ugly body, for he stooped, and he was so thin that there were dark lines between the different bones of his neck and shoulders" (106). It is unsurprising to learn that this young man, with a body seemingly

malnourished, diminished as if to make room for his massive intellectualism, reports that he is "quite incapable of dancing" (160). If it is Rachel's bodiliness that forges connections to the outside world—connections which in turn give her a sense of her own self within the world—it is also unsurprising to discover that Hirst believes people are all "quite alone" inside their own separate circles, that they "try to get out, but [they] can't," and that "You only make a mess of things by trying" (107).

Yet the aftermath of Rachel's death is not the first time something of Rachel's bodiliness has been transmitted to him. At the end of a dance at the hotel, after the hired musicians have insisted on retiring for the night, Rachel sits down to play piano, half-reproducing and half-creating a medley of tunes for which the party-goers may invent their own steps. "This is the dance for people who don't know how to dance!" she exclaims, and accordingly—though surprisingly—Hirst is first on the list of people to join in, "hop[ping] with incredible swiftness first on his left leg, then on his right" (166). As the feet of the party-goers "[fall] in with the rhythm," Hirst, along with everyone else, "show[s] a complete lack of self-consciousness"; he is able to put aside his usual hyper-intellectual, hyper-conscious, hyper-articulated sense of self and experience the feel of his own body (166). He shares with the other party-goers a series of calming sensations too when the dance dies down and Rachel shifts from dance tunes to Bach—her personal favorite. The party-goers, particularly "some of the younger dancers," gather around the piano and as they listen, "their nerves [are] quieted; the heat and soreness of their lips, the result of incessant talking and laughing, [is] smoothed away" (167). When Rachel concludes, she has lulled her audience into a state of bodily relaxation, and each feels a

distinct desire to sleep. Hirst does not absent himself from this communal event, nor does he seem to feel alienated from his body or his surroundings as he so often has before. Instead, it is as if Rachel has awakened a perhaps long-forgotten or long-repressed part of his subjectivity; his bodiliness is reestablished in this moment, and offers him a connectedness to his external milieu that his purely intellect-driven way of experiencing himself has not.

To end the novel with a reprise of Hirst's reawakened bodiliness, then, suggests that the robust possibilities of a Rachel-like selfhood are not undercut by her death, but in fact still operative and promising. Hirst, who earlier complained that "feelings" are given too much "allowance," seems only recently to have been put back in touch with his bodiliness. As such, he is only beginning to sense the validity of bodily subjectivity. Though Rachel's bodiliness, her inarticulateness, her unformedness, her unseasonable youth come together to initiate the novel's exploration of alternative subjectivity, the promise in this kind of subjectivity is not hers alone; it need not belong exclusively to this anomalous quasi-orphan with her abnormal education, but might have as much promise and validity for the stilted, hyper-intellectual academe. It might also have promise for Evelyn Murgatroyd, who experiences a "little gush of vitality" in the wake of Rachel's death when she wonders, "were these proposals and intimacies and adventures real, or was the contentment which she had seen on the faces of Susan and Rachel more real than anything she had ever felt?" (364-5). It is perhaps this question which steels her against the proposal of Mr. Perrott, realizing she does not feel for him as Susan seems to for Arthur, or Rachel for Terence. Instead, "she [feels] nothing" and the lack of bodily

sensation, when compared to the feeling of "blood [beginning] to circle through her body of its own accord" in the moments prior to his proposal, informs her conviction not to accept, as does the moment when he kisses her and it makes "little impression on her" (364-6). Rachel's mode of subjectivity seems to have transcended her death when we examine these episodes with Hirst and Evelyn; her death has not represented its failure at all, but on the contrary has provided opportunities for it to be experienced and appreciated further by the novel's remaining characters whose perspectives unexpectedly come to the fore at the novel's end.

Conclusions

The recent attention given to the Modernist bildungsroman (variously called "late bildungsroman," "counter-bildungsroman," "antibildungsroman," etc.) has illuminated various connections between the manipulations of this genre and the political reality of the early twentieth century, but less attention has been given to how the changing face of the bildungsroman between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries might also illuminate and changing concept of self. Franco Moretti gestures toward such a change in *The Way of the World*, arguing that Modern attention shifts from "identity" (a person's position within and internalization of a social order) to "subjectivity" because the social order becomes more stratified, more rigid during this era; there is less hope for social mobility, a phenomenon he associates with increasingly capitalistic economic practices. Because the social order becomes less amenable to the individual, he says, and less flexible to that individual's idiosyncrasies, the outer world becomes impersonal and threatening, and cannot be internalized as it was before. The negotiation of selfhood, then, recedes inside, according to Moretti, to the intensely personal experience of subjectivity. But Moretti's account of this shift focuses on its causes rather than on its effects, leaving scholars ample opportunity to explore the phenomenology of such a change, the possibilities inherent in it, and the actual directions in which Modernists chose to take it.

For Woolf, this increased focus on subjectivity over and against "identity" means attending to the phenomenology of body as well as mind as she struggles to work through, in her characters, the unexplored potential of bodily subjectivity. Although Rachel's death may seem at first glance to nullify the potential of this kind of subjectivity,

this potential in fact lives on in the characters left standing at the novel's conclusion, and, in fact, her death prompts the recognition—in Hirst, Evelyn, and the reader—of bodily subjectivity's potentials and its validity. Woolf will further explore the aesthetic, political, and existential pay-off of bodily subjectivity in works like *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Waves*, and *The Years*.

For scholars, exploring the kinds of subjects which inhabit Modernist bildungsromane, and how such subjects differ (or do not) from those of the classical bildungsroman opens up promising avenues of inquiry for those interested in gender and sexuality studies, affect theory, and even posthumanism, just as it has already done (and will continue to do) for cultural and post-colonial studies. And Virginia Woolf's work, as it has done so often in the past, proves to be especially fertile ground for the exploration of subjectivity—as conceived in the Modernist era and beyond—and its relevance to ongoing political, aesthetic, and philosophical conversations.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, M. M. "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism: Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Print.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs*, 1.4 (1976): 875-893. Print.

Damasio, Antonio. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt Inc, 1999. Print.

Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Print.

---. "Virginia Woolf's Colony and the Adolescence of Modern Fiction." *Modernism and Colonialism*. Eds. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007. Print.

Giffin, Michael. "Prologue." *Female Maturity from Jane Austen to Margaret Atwood: When Bildungsroman Meets Zeitgeist*. Amazon Digital Services, Inc., 2013. Kindle File.

Gordon, Mary. "Bodies of Knowledge." *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*. Ed. Francine Prose. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2003. Print. 97-100.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. Print.

Hall, G. Stanley. *Adolescence, its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education, Vol I*. New York and London: D. Appleton, 1916. Print.

Kitsi-Mitakou, Katerina K. *Feminist Readings of the Body in Virginia Woolf's Novels*. Diss. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1997. Thessaloniki: GIAHOUDI - GIAPOULI, 1997. Print.

McDowell, Frederick P. W., "'Surely Order Did Prevail': Virginia Woolf and *The Voyage Out*." *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*. Ed. Ralph Freedman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Print.

Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. London: Verso, 2000. Print.

Naremore, James. *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. Print.

Poresky, Louise A. *The Elusive Self: Psyche and Spirit in Virginia Woolf's Novels*. East Brunswick: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1981. Print.

Rosenfeld, Natania. *Outsiders Together: Virginia and Leonard Woolf*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.

Wood, James. "Virginia Woolf's Forgetful Selves." *The Mrs. Dalloway Reader*. Ed. Francine Prose. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2003. Print. 93-6.

Woolf, Virginia. *Melymbrosia*. San Francisco: Cleis Press Inc., 1982. Print.

---. "On Being Ill." *The Moment and Other Essays*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1948. 9-23. Print.

---. *The Voyage Out*. San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1920. Print.